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(Cont!nued.) "I wronged you, Mr. Pinckney," he said at last. "I see you intend to do the fair thing. All right. I won't say anything more."

"But, remember," said Pinckney warningly, "the least word and the contract would be off. You must trust me. And another thing"-he hesitated a moment, then spoke meaningly-"the contract will be no good on earth should the Sommers gun turn out to be better than the Rhinestrom gun." Marsh nodded with the confidence of

the inventor in his own work. "That is a chance we have to take, but I think we will come out all right.

The Rhinestrom gun is a winner." After the head draughtsman was gone Pinckney pondered a long time. Finally he called in his stenographer and dictated to her a contract between the Durant Steel company and Wilhelm Rhinestrom by which the Durant Steel company agreed to take over the Rhinestrom patents and pay the inventor \$6,000 royalty on every gun six inches or under and \$1,000 an inch for every additional inch above six. The contract he signed as manager of the steel company. Then he sent a long cable explaining what he had done to Durant, although he knew Durant was on the ocean and would not receive it. That night in his own room the man-

ager figured just what he would make -on every gun six inches and under \$5,400 and \$900 for every additional inch above six. "And at that," he said to himself

with a sneer, "everybody will be happy. .That fool Marsh will make his \$600 and his \$100. That is enough for him, and Durant can stand the price. It means wealth and that girl, too"-he paused, and a sinister light came into his eyes-"if only that Sommers gun is a failure. I wonder"-

"George. I was ashamed of you-positively ashamed of you. Your first night home and you sit up at the table and talk nothing but steel and arcenary and croop guns and that sort of thing, and when we have a guest here too! I don't know what Lieutenant Sommers thought of you."

Mrs. Durant spoke irritably, but her husband, who knew her ideas on business matters from long experience, merely smiled with toleration."

It was the first night after his return from a trip abroad on business, and Sommers and Pinckney had both been to dinner with the family.

"Now, now, my dear," the steel man protested, "I'm sure this naval chap is interested in what I have to say. If he invents guns himself he ought to be interested, and he certainly paid

Mrs. Durant's lip curled. "Paid attention!" she sniffed. "I guess be paid attention because you are Frances' father, not for any other

Durant pricked up his ears at once. "Frances' father?" he asked.

should that interest this fellow?" The father was plainly put out. He had too long held the idea that the name of Durant in the steel world would be perpetuated by the marriage of Frances and his protege, Edward Pinckney, for him to hear with equanimity that a penniless naval officer was paying her any attention.

"Now, look here, George Durant," exclaimed his wife indignantly, "don't you dare to pretend yourself that Frances is not attractive!"

"I never pretended any such thing," he protested.

"You did!" she declared insistently. "But, my dear"-"Didn't you say you were surprised

that this naval man was paying her attention? That's the same thing as saying she's not attractive, and I want to tell you that Frances is the prettiest girl in Pittsburg, even if she is your daughter."

George Durant smiled placidly. "Well, my dear, you see, she's bound to be pretty. Think of her mother." "Now, don't try to soft soap me just because I'm your wife, George. Remember I've had twenty years of your blarney and I recognize it."

"All right, my dear," he agreed. "We'll let it go at that. Let the naval disfavor. man pay attention to her. It won't do him any good."

"I should hope not!" exclaimed his wife piously. "The idea of any girl marrying a man who couldn't come home nights more than one-tenth of the time!"

Edward Pinckney entered from the library, where he had been to arrange some business matters for his chief. "Your stenographer is ready, sir, whenever you want her," he said.

Mrs. Durant threw up her hands in "Good gracious, George, you are not going to work on your first night home?" He looked at her in an apologetic,

guilty fashion. "Well, my dear, you see," he hesitated, "the work has to be done some way, and I just wanted to get a start. I have to go over some matters with Edward about this Rhinestrom gun and also about this gun invented by Sommers which we are casting for the government. It won't be much work, and I have my stenographer and sec-

retary all ready."

Before the wife could protest further Frances and Sommers entered the drawing room. The old steel man did not give his wife a chance to argue. "Ah, Sommers," he exclaimed gen-

ially, "I was just hoping you'd come in! I owe you an apology, my wife says, and I wanted to deliver it." "Apology! For what?" exclaimed the lieutenant, mystified.

Durant winked at him. 'Why, Lieutenant Sommers," he said, with assumed seriousness, thought I owed you an apology for my conversation at dinner discussing truck gun work and steel and gun making generally—those subjects in

which you have no interest and could not understand." Sommers, catching the spirit of the

scene, bowed seriously. "Your apology is accepted, Mr. Durant," he said. "I thought myself it was rather strange that you should choose a subject on a thing neither one of us knew anything about; but, of course, as you were host I chipped in and did the best I could. I hope my remarks on the subject weren't altogether foolish."

Durant turned to his wife. "There, my dear. You see I've done everything you asked. I've apologized. But really we only talked on that subject because we both thought it was the one thing you were interested in, so we'll have forgiveness all the way round. And now I must get to work." "George." she pleaded.

He paused for one second, his hand

"Only a little while. You'll all excuse me?" Sommers and Pinckney bowed, but

Frances laughed out loud. "Dear old dad, what difference would it make whether we excuse you or not? We know you'll go anyway." "Well, I won't be long," he protest

ed: "really I won't." When the door had closed behind him Mrs. Durant drew a long breath; then she brought her foot down with emphasis that was almost a stamp.

"I'm going into that study," she clared, "and stay there until I get him out. The idea of his beginning business on the first night home! He won't stay long after I come in!"

"Indeed he won't," agreed Frances "You know," she went on, with a laughing explanation to Sommers, "whenever mother decides that father simply shall not work she goes into the room, takes a seat where he is bound to see her and just sits there staring at him reproachfully. She calls it moral sussion."

"But does it work?" asked Sommers "Does it work?" interpolated Pinckney. "If you'd ever seen it you'd understand it would work."

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Frances. "Father will struggle along for five or ten or even fifteen minutes, but at last that steady stare gets too much for his nerves. He'll begin to make mistakes in his dictating, and at last-he'll jump out of his chair and stare, and then mother will beave a long sigh and say: 'George, dear, I know you are tired. Don't you think you'd better stop awhile?' And he stops."

"What a splendid system!" laughed Sommers. "And what do you do, Miss Durant, when you want to manage him?"

The girl smiled "Oh, that's a secret," she said. "I

have my own way of doing it, but it works, doesn't it, Edward?" "You're right there," agreed Pinckney. "I won't forget in a hurry how

you handled mm raphy scheme." "Wireless telegraphy!" exclaimed the naval man. "Do you mean to tell me that you understand wireless telegra-

phy too?" "Not very much," confessed the girl, "but I do know something about it Edward taught me the rudiments, and then I went to work myself. I got some of the men up from the shops, and they rigged up a station for me at the top of the house. Father did not know a thing about it until one day I

brought him up there and showed him. He didn't think it was very nice for a girl, but what could he do?" "Oh," said Sommers, "I see your system. You do what you please and

then make him agree." "Don't you think it a good one?" in quired the girl innocently. The man smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Good for little things, but how would it work for a big one?" The question was lightly put, and all three were smiling. The smiles on the men's faces were just a bit set, for

behind that question both knew there was a great deal left unsaid. Frances tossed her head lightly, but the tone of her answer was vital with

"And on the big ones, too, Mr. Sommers. I do always what seems best Pinckney turned away sharply, while

the smile in the face of the naval officer became more natural and a little broader. "You know I'd like to see this wire-

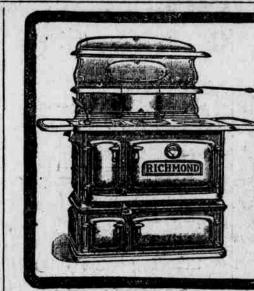
less room," he said. "It must be a bully place." "Oh, it's a workroom," the girl insisted-"nothing foolish about it. I'm

not as good yet as Edward at sending and taking, but then I have more time to practice, and if he doesn't hustle I'll beat him." "You flatter me," said Pinckney.

"Really, Mr. Sommers, she can beat me, I think, but we do have great fun working over it." "Yes; Edward and I are more or

less partners-in this," agreed Frances. "Partners?" Sommers tried to keep his tone light-

ly unpersonal, but a little hardness had to creep in. The two men were so naturally antagonistic that probably they must have taken opposite sides on anything, and the feeling of each for the girl only tended to bring out more keenly their laborn antipathy. Since the afternoon when Pinckney interrupted the practical love scene between Frances and Sommers on the hill above the works the tension had been greater than ever between the men. Each treated the other with elaborate courtesy, but it needed only a word on either side to bring about real trouble. The more impulsive and domineering Pinckney had been close to the limit of endurance several times, and on each occasion the cool courtesy, the splendid self control and the good breeding of the naval officer had pre-



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vented an outp.e.k. Sommers realized his position. He knew that Pinckney was the manager of the works where his gun was to be cast. He knew also that Pinckney probably in the end would marry the girl they both loved, and in many respects he had the right of way. All this had made the naval man circumspect in his dealings. He could not afford to have an open break

with Pinckney.

An open fight between a naval officer on duty, as Sommers practically was, and a manager of a big gun works must result in a court martial and the possible disgrace of the officer, and unless the provocation were great it would mean bringing the uniform into disgrace by conduct which might be construed as unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. Pinckney had no one except Mr. Durant to whom he must account, and Sommers knew that a man as clever and as unscrupulous as he believed Pinckney in some ways to be would not hesitate to do anything that might put a rival in an embarrassing position. However, the naval man could not imagine for a moment that the manager could be guilty of any conduct that might injure his work. He considered the matter between them entirely a personal fight, and he believed that Pinckney's ill will would not go further than some petty spite to injure him or supplant him with Miss Durant. The thought that Pinckney and the girl were partners in a wireless telegraph scheme against his will irritated the lieutenant.

"Couldn't I see the room?" he asked. "Though it does seem rather queer your having a workroom instead of a music room or a studio."

"Or a dressing room," laughed Fran-"Yes, or a dressing room," he agreed. "That's the sort of thing we might expect our young women of today to

The girl tilted her chin proudly. "Well, Mr. Doubter, if you will just come with me I'll show you it's a real

workroom.' "Indeed I will," be agreed eagerly. The girl arose.

"Come on, then." They had almost reached the door when she remembered that Pinckney had not been included in her invitation. He was standing over by the mantel, both hands stuffed in his pockets, and was grimly looking into the

"Oh, I forgot!" she exclaimed. "You want to come too, Edward? If you do, come ahead." For a second he seemed about to ac-

quickly: "But, then, it would bore you. You

can come up any time." The manager shrugged his shoulders with elaborate carelessness. "Yes: I have something to do." he

confessed. Then, after they had gone, he turned back to the fire angrily with a muttered exclamation:

"I'll fix that young cub!" To be Continued.) HOUSEHOLD NOTES

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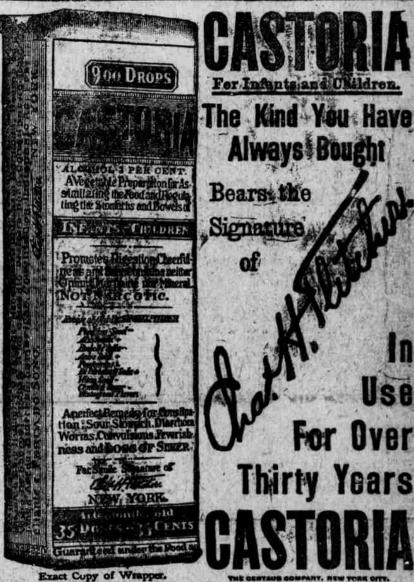
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